

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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R 241605Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2338

UNCLAS ALGIERS 1027

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, AG

SUBJECT: PORT CONGESTION SURCHARGE AT ALGERIAN PORTS

REF: STATE 086173

SUMMARY: ALGERIAN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE PORT CONDITIONS HAVE BEEN PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL. WHILE CONGESTION ON THE DOCKS IS STILL SERIOUS, NUMBER OF SHIPS WAITING FOR BERTHS HAS BEEN SHARPLY REDUCED. ALGERIAN AUTHORITIES ARE OPTIMISTIC THAT SITUATION IS IMPROVING.

1. PORT CONGESTION HAS BEEN SERIOUS PROBLEM IN ALGIERS AND ORAN IN PAST MONTHS. EMBASSY HAS COUNTED AS MANY AS 34 SHIPS WAITING FOR A BERTH DURING PEAK CONGESTION SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. SINCE A PORT DECONGESTION AND IMPROVEMENT CAMPAIGN WAS MOUNTED EARLY JANUARY, HOWEVER, THE NUMBER OF SHIPS WAITING TO UNLOAD HAS, ON AN AVERAGE, BEEN MUCH LOWER.

2. A MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION (PORTS) OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF THAT PORT IMPROVEMENT CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL. NEW PORT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT REFORM PROGRAM WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN A FEW WEEKS. THIS OFFICIAL CLAIMS PORT IMPROVEMENT IN TERMS OF

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WAITING FOR BERTHS IS PERMANENT CHANGE FOR BETTER NOT

TEMPORARY ALLEVIATION OF PROBLEM. HE SATED FLATLY THAT SHIPS WOULD NO LONGER HAVE TO WAIT FOR A BERTH IN ALGIERS. THIS OFFICIAL ALSO STATED OTHER ALGERIAN PORTS, SUCH AS ORAN, WERE NOW IN BETTER CONDITION THAN ALGIERS.

3. ALGERIAN NATIONAL SHIPPING AGENCY (CNAN) SAYS OTHER CONFERENCE SURCHARGES VARY FROM 10 TO 75 PERCENT. CNAN FEELS THAT SITUATION HAS IMPROVED AND THAT SOME SURCHARGES WOULD SOON BE LOWERED OR REMOVED. CNAN ALSO STATED THEY HAD RECEIVED A CABLE INDICATING THAT GULF STATES, MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE HAD ALSO RAISED SURCHARGE TO 100 PERCENT FOR ALGERIAN PORTS.

4. BOTH MINISTRY OFFICIALS AND CNAN OFFICIALS FEELS, OF COURSE, THAT 100 PERCENT SURCHARGE IS UNJUSTIFIED. THEY CITE RECENT PORT IMPROVEMENTS MENTIONED ABOVE AND ARE CONFIDENT THAT SITUATION IS GETTING BETTER, NOT WORSE.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: WE ARE NOT PORT SPECIALISTS, AND IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO JUDGE THE RELATIVE SITUATION HERE. WE CAN RELATE THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS: IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS THERE HAVE BEEN NO SHIPS WAITING FOR BERTHS IN PORT OF ALGIERS. IN RECENT MONTHS HUGE AMOUNTS OF HEAVY EQUIPMENT AND MERCHANDISE HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE PORT AREA TO OTHER STORAGE AREAS NEAR THE AIRPORT AND FAIRGROUNDS. THE PURPOSE OF THIS MOVEMENT BEING TO RELIEVE CONGESTION IN THE PORT AREA. EMBOFF PERSONALLY VISITED PORT AND QUAIS APRIL 23 AND NOTED MANY EMPTY BERTHS. CONGESTION ON DOCKS, HOWEVER, STILL APPEARS TO BE SERIOUS. WE FEEL THAT OVERALL PORT SUTATION HAS IMPROVED RECENTLY BUT ONLY TIME WILL CONFIRM GOA CLAIMS THAT IMPROVEMENT IS PERMANENT.LYNE

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